

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Birthday Blessings recipients enjoy CPCC Summer Theatre Children's Show

Local homeless children enjoy special performance of "Willy Wonka & the Chocolate Factory"

Central Piedmont Community College (CPCC) Summer Theatre performers brought smiles to the faces of local homeless children today on the College's Central Campus. As part of a special community outreach project, CPCC invited youngsters associated with Birthday Blessings, a local non-profit organization bringing birthday joy and support to homeless children, to a free performance of its 2009 Summer Theatre Children's Show – "Willy Wonka & the Chocolate Factory."

"The children thoroughly enjoyed the show and the characters," said Amy Cervantes, co-founder of Birthday Blessings. "We are grateful to CPCC for hosting such a special Birthday Blessings celebration and providing the children with an opportunity to experience live theater. The college is a valued community asset and we look forward to continuing this partnership."

More than 40 Birthday Blessings children, parents and volunteers, associated with the YWCA Families Together program, streamed through the College's Halton Theater doors to participate in the one-day event. In addition to the performance of "Willy Wonka," birthday festivities included a special "meet and greet" with the show's actors and a birthday cake, donated by Tizzerts.

"The children's faces expressed pure enjoyment from the time the curtain opened until it closed," said Melissa Vrana, associate dean of CPCC's Arts, Communications and Central Campus. "Many of these youngsters have never attended a live, theater production. The experts say it can take just one experience to be bitten by the 'acting bug.' Who knows, this time next year I may see some of these children acting on the Halton Theater stage; that would be great."

Birthday Blessings is a local non-profit organization that brings birthday joy and support to homeless children and families living in Charlotte, N.C., and the surrounding area. Co-founded by Amy and John Cervantes, the organization hosts monthly birthday parties at each of the seven shelters they serve. In addition, Birthday Blessings sponsors approximately 25 classroom birthday parties for homeless elementary students across CMS, and the organization also provides Blessing Baskets that welcome and support the arrival of homeless babies.

Central Piedmont Community College is the largest community college in North Carolina, offering close to 300 degree and certification programs, customized corporate training, market-focused continuing education, and special interest classes. CPCC is academically, financially and geographically accessible to all citizens of Mecklenburg County. In 2002, the National Alliance of Business named CPCC the Community College of the Year for its response to the workforce and technology needs of local employers and job seekers through innovative educational and training strategies.

This release prepared by Mallory Benz, 704.330.6613. An archive of CPCC news releases is at <http://www.cpcc.edu/college-news>.